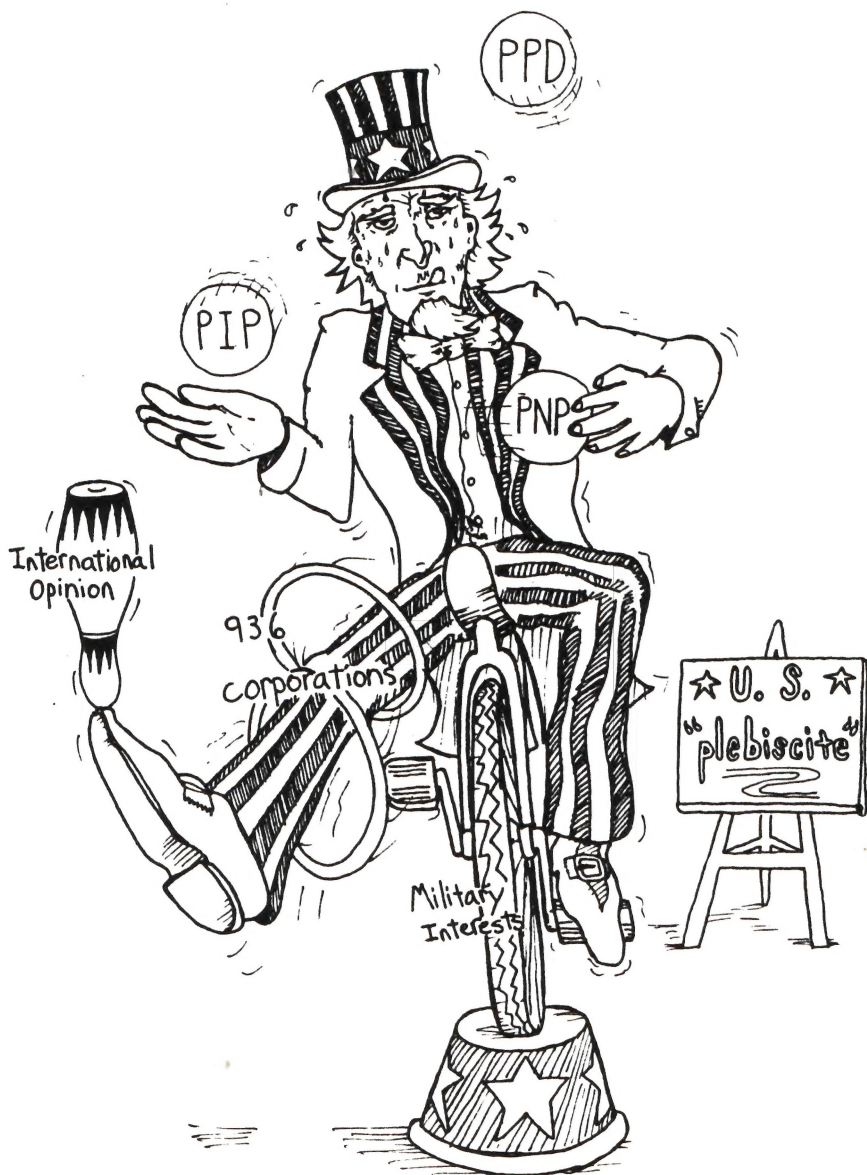


CAN PUERTO RICO HAVE A FREE AND FAIR REFERENDUM UNDER US COLONIALISM?



WHAT IS A REFERENDUM?

A referendum is a non-binding vote that is being proposed by the U.S. government to "resolve the status of Puerto Rico." It has limitations because, unlike a plebiscite, it does not follow U.N. regulations on the procedure to resolve a nation's colonial status. For instance, U.N. regulations require that all U.S. troops be removed from Puerto Rico to have free and fair elections.

WHY IS THE REFERENDUM BEING PROPOSED NOW?

1. International Pressure. The recent Bertrand Russell Tribunal meeting in Barcelona, Spain condemned U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico. And, since 1973, the U.N. Decolonization Committee has affirmed that Puerto Rico is a US colony and that the U.S. should decolonize Puerto Rico.
2. Economic disaster. The Puerto Rican economy is in shambles. There is a 40% unemployment rate, that is only getting worse as U.S. factories move to countries where they pay the workers even less than in Puerto Rico.

WHAT IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

In February, 1989, President Bush called for a referendum in Puerto Rico to resolve the status question. The U.S. wants to end international criticism, and be able to wash it's hands of the economic problems, while maintaining its military and industrial interests in Puerto Rico.

WHAT IS PUERTO RICO'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE U.S.?

Puerto Rico has been a U.S. colony since the U.S. military invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898. The pro-statehood, pro-commonwealth (status quo) and pro-independence parties recognized in a January, 1989 letter to President Bush concerning the proposed referendum, "The people of Puerto Rico have not been formally consulted by the United States of America as to their choice of their ultimate political status."

Colonialism for the Puerto Rican people means 13% of Puerto Rico is controlled and used by the U.S. military; 90% of the industry is U.S. owned and operated without the protection of U.S. environmental laws — and all profits are tax free. Any decision made by the Puerto Rican people is subject to veto by the U.S. Congress. And though bound by U.S. laws, Puerto Ricans can't vote in presidential elections.



WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR STATUS CHANGE IN PUERTO RICO?

Statehood — Bush and sectors of the U.S. government support statehood to ensure a safe haven for U.S. military and industry. But Puerto Ricans will never surrender their Spanish language and Latin American heritage.

Commonwealth — This means the maintenance of the status quo — Puerto Rico's dependent relationship on the U.S. with the possibility of more autonomy, such as the ability to enter into trade relations with other countries.

Independence — but of what nature? The U.S. could support an independence that guaranteed the presence of the U.S. military and industry. But, a true independence in which the Puerto Rican people decide what happens to their nation, based on the needs and desires of the Puerto Rican people is not what the U.S. has in mind.

WHY DO WE SAY INDEPENDENCE IS THE ONLY SOLUTION?

Puerto Rico is a nation — as such it has the right to independence and self-determination. Any other status continues U.S. control of Puerto Rico. U.S. control means everything in Puerto Rico is determined by U.S. interests, not those of the Puerto Rican people.

WHY SHOULD WE ACTIVELY SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE?

It is our country that has transformed the agriculture-rich, self-sufficient economy of Puerto Rico into one dependent on the U.S. To reduce the population to meet U.S. needs, the U.S. has carried out a massive sterilization campaign — now over 35% of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age have been sterilized. The U.S. not only militarily occupies Puerto Rico, but also carries out invasions of other nations from Puerto Rico. To strive for social justice, we must end colonialism.

We can organize and mobilize opposition to our country's actions in Puerto Rico. Our opposition will help to build a movement to force the U.S. out.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. Distribute this leaflet to 10 of your friends.
2. Set up a slide showing on U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico.
3. Be on our mailing list and emergency response list, so you will know when we have programs, demonstrations and letter campaigns.
4. Make a donation to the campaign.

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